

Thank you Chair and Committee,

I am a current state employee and none of this testimony was written during my work hours.

I am testifying on this bill due to the nature of long term TEMP status in the state of North Dakota. I worked for the NDDOT between 2014 and 2016. I was a long term TEMP employee. The work I did was necessary and when the department was forced to cut its TEMP staff, I along with many other long term temporary workers lost our good paying and necessary jobs.

I worked within the Environmental Technical Services Section. I worked with landowners to certify the use of their land for material source approval. I would go in and draw maps on what land would be environmentally sound to mine. I would also work on projects and became a bit of a Swiss Army Knife for the section. I worked directly with much of the staff and worked on a good deal of projects and made sure that work was done correctly, efficiently, and effectively.

I had worked for nearly 2 years at the position when I decided I could buy a house. It would have given my family and I further stability in Bismarck and allowed my children access to a backyard and their own bedrooms. I would have moved out of the 2 bedroom I lived in and given them a little bit of a better life than they had. Unfortunately, the price of oil sank.

The price of oil is an odd thing, to some it means cheaper cost of living, a smaller price paid to fill the tank, and lesser cost of getting goods due to cost of delivery. We in North Dakota have learned that the cost of oil affects us much differently. The decisions of the legislature and state funds hinge on the price of oil. It was a rough couple months of low oil prices for North Dakota, which means that it was time to scrap hard working people.

I had found a nice duplex I was going to buy. I would live on the top level and rent out the basement. It had a large yard, a shed, and a garage. My closing date was March 12th. March began like any other month, I was working on the final arrangements to buy my house, working to help a local charity I was involved in, and working my job. The Department head called me into the office and let me know that I would be laid off, not because of anything I had done, not because the work I did wasn't necessary, but because the coffers of the state said they couldn't afford me. My last day would be March 12th. I would no longer be able to buy a house. I no longer had a plan to move forward. It was hell and why did this happen? Because the state was too poor to handle mine and my fellow workers' salaries any more. The legislature hadn't granted enough Full Time Employment positions to cover the work needed to be done at the NDDOT.

The legislature role of determining the needs of departments and what is "good" politically when it comes down to budgeting. The people that head departments know their needs and shouldn't have to beg for the meager staffing they receive. These decisions need to come from a level that understands the workings inside the department and what is necessary. A good guy post for this would be positions that are kept for 2 years to become Full Time Employees. Please support this bill.

Joseph Roberson-Kitzman